



U.S./Russia Tensions Escalate to Most Dangerous Level Yet After Crimea Attack

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Anytime the United States gets involved in a new war, it is always of a massive risk. Wars in general have a history of spiralling out of control. You can really predict them. And the history of getting involved, either as a funder of the war or using it as a proxy is that often time the original mission, as limited as it's intended to be, has a way of spiralling far beyond the original vision. And exactly that is what's happening with the war in Ukraine, the one that is now basically a war between the United States and NATO on one side and Russia on the other, using Ukraine as their playground and their battlefield. And the problem from the start has always been this lingering question, which is: What possible interest do American citizens have in getting involved in a border war between Russia and Ukraine? The demands of Russia before the war were that Ukraine has to agree not to join NATO, they have to be a neutral country, kind of a buffer between the West, which keeps expanding eastward toward Russia and Russia itself, and that the US has to, along with NATO, cease military operations and other political influence campaigns inside Ukraine, that it would be a neutral country, neither pro-Russia nor pro-Western in terms of its alliances. Since 2014, when the United States backed a successful coup that removed the elected President of Ukraine, Russia has also annexed Crimea, which is full of almost entirely people who identify as Russian, the Russian speaking, their ethnic Russians. Their loyalty is to Moscow or not to Kiev, and they have also done the most that they could to protect the Russian ethnic speaking people who dominate the eastern provinces of Ukraine, which has been waging a war of separation or civil war against the government in Kiev since 2014. Now, the question from all of this has always been: If you're an American citizen, what possible interest do you have in whether Zelensky or Putin governs Crimea, and whether the people of Crimea want to be governed by Russia or by Ukraine? And what possible interest is it of American citizens to fight a war over who governs various provinces in the eastern part of Ukraine, where, again, most of the people in that part of Ukraine have far more connection and identification with being Russian than they do with being Ukrainian and being loyal to Moscow than they do to Kiev? But there was this fairy tale sold, as usual, the same fairy tale that gets sold for every American war, that we are the leaders of the free world. And as a result, our obligation is to go and protect democracy against the advance of totalitarianism,

wherever it may emerge. And we were there benevolently to protect Ukrainian democracy from Russian aggression. Now, we have spent many, many shows over the last two years documenting and demonstrating why that propaganda is on multiple levels blatantly false. And I'm not going to repeat any of that tonight. But I do want to emphasise that also, since the beginning, in addition to deconstructing the propaganda, what has really motivated our coverage has been a concern about what is obviously a proxy war between the countries that have the two largest nuclear stockpiles on the planet. And even though there is no more Soviet Union, the Russians have full control over that nuclear arsenal. And it is all based on archaic Cold War systems where each country has thousands of intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear tip missiles aimed at one another's major cities. There are all sorts of ways with Russian nuclear submarines lurking off the coast of Cuba, or with US missiles stationed in Eastern Europe to launch nuclear weapons through misperception or miscommunication, or intentionally, in a way that would give the world maybe five minutes to try and save itself. At the same time that Russiagate and all of the hoaxes surrounding it have made contact between Washington and Moscow almost non-existent, far less so than during the Cold War. Now that has always been the two fold concern; it's of no interest to the American public, the only people who benefit are arms dealers and the U.S. intelligence community, and Ukrainian oligarchs and corrupt Ukrainian government officials and the risk of real danger escalation between the US and Russia, which always brings with it the risk of nuclear war.

Now, as serious as those dangers have been from the beginning, they have gotten much worse over the last several months, in part because of Joe Biden's announcement that he was lifting a very important restriction, namely the restriction that had been in place since the beginning of the war that the weapons the United States was providing to Ukraine could not be used to attack Russian soil inside Russian territory. And we have now lifted that restriction and we told the Ukrainians, you're free to use our weapons, including to attack on the other side of the border, if doing so is necessary for military ends. But something far worse from a perspective of escalation took place over this weekend. Here you see the reaction of the Russian embassy. I believe this is in the UK. And here's what they report. Remember, this is the Russian perspective. So it doesn't mean that you should take everything in this as true. The point here is to understand what the Russians are thinking, saying and doing to understand the gravity of the risks. Quote, "Five people, including three children, were killed and 124 civilians were injured as a result of the Ukrainian armed forces attack on Sevastopol". That's inside Crimea. "According to the Russian Defence ministry, today at 12:15, a terrorist missile strike by five U.S. made ATACMS, operational tactical missiles equipped by cluster warheads, was deliberately delivered to the site. The American specialist input all flight tasks in the US made ATACMS operational tactical missiles on the basis of data of the US satellite reconnaissance. That is why Washington is mostly responsible for the deliberate airstrike at peaceful residence by delivering this weaponry to Ukraine, as well as the Kiev regime from the territory of which the strike was launched". They go on: "Such actions are not going to be left unanswered. The video shows the moment of the attack. And then here's the video. There's the beach on Sevastopol, which is commonly used by the beach, the same way beaches in any other countries are, by civilians. It's a popular site for people in that area to go and sunbathe and take their kids to play on the beach. And here is what

happened in an attack that the Russians are blaming the Americans for having launched.

Now just to emphasise the dangers here. From the BBC and this was from earlier today. There you see the headline: *Russia blames US for Crimea deaths and vows response*. So regardless of what you think about the validity of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the fact of the matter is that the Russians have been, in fact, governing Crimea since 2014, and then for centuries before that. And the people in Crimea, everyone acknowledges, want to be part of Russia and not part of Ukraine. That is the sovereign desire of the people who live there. Which was the rationale we used to justify why Kosovo should be broken off from Serbia in the war in the Balkans in the 1990s by saying, Oh, look, the people in Kosovo have no allegiance to Belgrade. They want to be a separate, independent country and we recognise them as such. And Putin at the time warned that is a very dangerous precedent because of how Europe is constructed. All sorts of countries have provinces and parts shoved into them who don't identify with that country, but instead identify with other countries, including Russia. And if that's the precedent, namely that the people of a certain province like Kosovo can break off and declare themselves independent simply because the majority of residents want to, he warned that a lot of Europe would end up being mapped a very different way. And the Russians have run Crimea, where the strike took place, and they considered the people who live there and the people who die there their own citizens. And so, of course, when they see the United States playing a major role in an attack on what they regarded as Russian soil, that killed what they regard as Russian citizens, of course they're going to respond the way we would if Russia or China or anybody else wants missiles or played a major role in an attack on what we regarded as American soil. Here, the BBC says, quote, "Russia's defence ministry said the missiles used by Ukraine were U.S. supplied ATACMS missiles and claimed they were programmed by US specialists. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the strike, quote, 'barbaric' and accused the US of, quote, 'killing Russian children'. He pointed to comments by President Vladimir Putin, who recently vowed to target countries supplying weapons to Ukraine. Russia's defence ministry claimed on Sunday that the missiles are all programmed by US specialists and guided by American satellites". That's their rationale for blaming the United States. Not only that these missiles were provided to Ukraine by the US, but also that the US necessarily plays a critical role in programming where they're targeted and launched. Quote, "Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reiterated the claim during a meeting in Minsk on Monday, saying that the system, quote, 'cannot be used without the direct participation of the American military, including satellite capabilities'. The US has been supplying these missiles to Ukraine for over a year. The system allows Ukrainian forces to strike targets up to 300 km (186 miles) away, according to manufacturer

Now if you want, I guess you can just dismiss all of this and say, Oh, the Russians are bluffing. They are not really going to do anything. They don't really care if the United States attacks what they regard as Russian soil and kills what they regard as Russian civilians, including Russian children, they're not going to do anything about it. It's all fine. Don't worry about it. Don't pay attention to it. That kind of indifference, that mentality which has been deliberately cultivated, as we'll show you in the West by the Western press, is the definition of madness. If you don't think that the risk of nuclear annihilation, once the two countries

with the largest stockpiles are engaged in a conflict of this kind, then you either know nothing about the nuclear systems that each country has in place and the doctrines that govern their use or you're so obsessed with hatred for Russia because you believe that they are the ones who caused the defeat of Hillary Clinton, or for whatever other reason, that that hatred is blinding you to the risks that are very, very real and obviously very consequential. Now, if you think this is hyperbole, I just want to show you what Joe Biden himself said in October of 2022, almost two years ago, a little under two years ago about the Ukraine war. Remember the war in which he decided to involve the United States. This was Biden's own statement. Quote, "Biden says the nuclear risk is the highest since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis". If we can put the BBC article, the headline on the screen so people can read it. All right, we'll get that up on the screen for you. But that was Joe Biden, and we've gone over the statement before where he said, quote, "'For the first time since the Cuban Missile Crisis, we have a direct threat to the use of nuclear weapons, if in fact things continue down the path they've been going', Mr. Biden told fellow Democrats. 'We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis!'. What in Ukraine is worth that risk? And this was October of 2022, at a time when there were all sorts of limitations. The Americans vowed they would never relinquish. Almost all of which have been given up one after the next. Sending tanks, sending certain long range missile systems, sending offensive capabilities, sending tanks, and now lifting the restrictions on the use of American weapons to strike inside Russia, that was all after Joe Biden in October 2022, said the risk from the war in Ukraine and the involvement of the US and Russia brought the world to the brink of, or closer to nuclear exchange than at any point since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. And for those of you who don't know much about that, the world came about six minutes away from blowing itself up. Because the Cubans asked the Soviets to place weapons, nuclear weapons, nuclear missiles on Cuban soil after the United States tried and failed to invade Cuba and overthrow the Cuban government. And the position of the US was, we can't tolerate nuclear weapons, nuclear missiles off the coast 90 miles from our shore. And the position of the Russians that is the same one that Americans like to use for Ukraine, which is, look, Cuba is a sovereign country, they can ask any other country they want to station missiles there if those countries want to. But it was a standoff and there were at least two moments, one of which has been well documented, where a Russian submarine, a nuclear armed submarine, believed, erroneously, that it was under attack. That the United States had decided to launch a full on war against Russia. And the commander of that submarine made the decision to launch the nuclear weapons that submarine was carrying onto US soil, believing that the US was doing that to Russia. It was just a misperception. Which is the most likely way of war of this kind, and nuclear exchange is going to happen. Otherwise, you basically have to have a psychopath, a suicidal psychopath or sociopath in power who decides he doesn't care about blowing up the world. The more likely way is misconception. And that almost happened. It was only when a senior official thankfully overrode that commander's decision. Basically, a person, a Russian military official who saved the world from nuclear annihilation, in 1962. Are we here to talk about any of this? But there has been a deliberate effort inside Western media to encourage people to stop caring so much about the threat of nuclear war, it is shocking to watch.

Here from CNN is an article by the former Republican congressman Adam Kinzinger and Ben Hodges, the title of which was: *Time to call Putin's bluff*. Time to call his bluff. Quote, "The idea that Russia would use nukes has been shown not to" – I just have to underline this part because it is actually kind of remarkable to read. "The idea that Russia would use nukes has been shown not to be a real concern", say Adam Kinzinger and Ben Hodges. Don't worry about it. Quote, "Just as we slowly ratchet up pressure, so could Russia slowly increase its pain tolerance and have chosen to react at any point. As any military expert or general (or sergeant for that matter) will tell you, destroying the enemy is, of course, the most important element of victory, whether in direct combat or whether they are grouping, planning or executing the war. The idea that as of today, Russia can essentially consider its own territory, quote, 'a safe haven' against US weaponry runs counter to the objective of a Ukrainian victory". What they're saying is, full Ukrainian victory which they have defined as the expulsion of every Russian troop from every inch of Ukrainian soil, including Crimea, which I am absolutely certain the Russians would use nuclear weapons in order to prevent, because they regard US control of Crimea through Ukraine as an existential threat to their security. If you look at a map of the Black Sea in the history of Russia, the reasons for that are obvious. But what these maniacs and they are absolute maniacs are trying to convince you is that the goal of victory in Ukraine, absolute total victory, which we are further away than ever, is so paramount. You shouldn't worry about the possibility of nuclear war, because the war itself is so worth it to win. Here in the Atlantic, Anne Applebaum, a standard neocon who is responsible for every deranged and grotesque and destructive foreign policy of the United States over the last 25 years. One of the people advocating every one of those destructive wars and of course maintains her standing in mainstream corporate media. This is what she said in The Atlantic in 2022. And by the way, her husband is a Polish official. I believe he was the former prime minister of Poland or the deputy prime minister. And so obviously the Polish have a very heavy stake in this war. And she's a fanatical supporter of the war in Ukraine. And her article was: *Fear of Nuclear War Has Worked the West's Ukraine Strategy*. "Leaders shouldn't give in to Putin's nuclear rhetoric". Again, ignore the risk of nuclear weapons. Quote, "Our self-imposed limitations may well have encouraged Putin to believe that American support for Ukraine is limited and will soon end. Our insistence that Ukraine not harm Russia or Russians in its own defence, might explain why he keeps fighting. Perhaps our nuclear anxiety actually encourages him to carry out non-nuclear mass atrocities; he does so because he believes you will not face consequences, because we will not escalate. Given the growing popularity of the word restraint, we must consider how that concept might not only prolong the war, but lead to a nuclear catastrophe. What if calls for peace actually reinforce Putin's deep belief, when he has expressed many times that the West is weak and degenerate? The less fear we show, the more Putin himself will be afraid".

The game these people are playing is absolute madness. And I know that it has become normalised, this rhetoric, and so it might not strike us as insane and sick and dangerous as it should. But it is all of those things, no matter how accustomed you become to hearing it. One of the things I've been doing over these past several weeks is going through the Richard Nixon Presidential Library Foundation, which has a page on YouTube with some of his most important speeches and interviews, including interviews he gave in his post-presidential

period after he resigned the presidency in 1974 due to the Watergate scandal. And like most politicians, he became much more candid and much more able, free to say what he really thinks when he no longer had the responsibility of running the US government and the need to ensure political victory in elections and the like. He was just a private citizen. He was nearing the end of his life, and he wanted to speak about all the things that he had seen. And whatever you think about Richard Nixon, he is an incredibly complicated figure, to put that mildly he was really at the centre of almost every major 20th century event that drove post-World War Two history and the latter half of the 20th century, starting when he was a vehemently anti-communist congressman from California who was aligned with Joseph McCarthy and then he became the vice president at quite a young age for the entire administration of Dwight Eisenhower. So he was Dwight Eisenhower's young vice president during all the 1950s. He ran for president in 1960 and very narrowly lost to JFK in an election that was decided by Illinois that many historians believe to this day was decided by fraud in Chicago by the Daley machine. He ran for governor in 1962 of California and lost, that was when he gave his famous speech: You don't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore. But then he came back and ran for president in 1968, when Lyndon Johnson was forced out of the Democratic primary by anti-war activists in his own party, and he ended up facing Hubert Humphrey and won. And then he won re-election in a massive landslide against George McGovern in 1972. And so Nixon, one of the things he did, despite being a vehement anti-communist, in fact, probably because of that, was he met constantly with Soviet leaders going all the way back to the 1950s, when the whole world was driven by animosity and really hatred between the US and the USSR. He still vehemently believed in the necessity to sit down with Russian leaders, to understand them, to make Russian leaders understand the American perspective, to keep those lines of communication very open. And then, very controversially, especially among people in his own party to the right, he opened up relations with Red China in 1972 by visiting China along with Henry Kissinger. And that was what opened the relationship between the United States and China that endures to this day. And there's a part of this interview where he explains in really interesting ways why he did that, but really prescient as well. But I want to show you the part of the interview where he talks about why he thought it was so important for the United States and Russia to even when we had irreconcilable ideological differences between capitalism and communism and all the things each side thought about the other, to keep these lines of communication constantly open, to have personal relationships between American leaders and Soviet leaders. Here's what he said.

Richard Nixon (RN): And so, under the circumstances, then, Sputnik meant that we were moving into the missile age, where you wouldn't have any warning time, maybe 30 minutes before any kind of a war could come about. So I would say that, what Sputnik meant, is that it made even more vital the necessity of having very close communication, the hot line, everything else, between the two superpowers, even though they totally dislike each other, they totally disagree. Because you are not going to have the time to have long conversations and so forth prior to a confrontation that could lead to war. It means that we must have a great sense of urgency about that situation.

Interviewer: It seems to me that it's even intensified now, Mr. President, by the new generation of missiles, which, if I understand it correctly, can hit the Soviet Union within eight minutes, and they're putting ones in that can hit us within eight minutes. I don't know what you can do in eight minutes. It seems to me that time has run out, almost.

RN: The Pershing missiles, for example, that will be in Europe can hit the Soviet Union in eight minutes. And the missiles that the Soviet Union has on their submarines can reach us.

Interviewer: That's right.

RN: And assuming that they put them into Cuba again, which they very well might, they might even have them in there now, I wouldn't be surprised. They could get here in five minutes to Miami or less. So under the circumstances, it does indicate the urgency of having maximum contact to avoid the possibility of war by miscalculation..

Interviewer: Because one button pushed by some sergeant someplace could set the whole thing off.

GG: So there you see the attitude of Richard Nixon that has been completely lost by Western liberals, which is that no matter how much you hate another country, it's vital, especially when that other countries a nuclear power to keep communications open in order to prevent a nuclear war.

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